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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly describes a higher education reform movement underway in Sweden and offers, respectively, the text and a summary of two policy-forming memoranda. A 1977 legislative decision on all postsecondary education gave the government authority to set education policy, and based the entire university and university college system on politically defined needs. This situation provoked strong criticism from students and college and university faculty. In addition others critiqued the internal university administration. A 1991 task force was charged with changing the higher education organization. The text of one statement, signed by the minister of education and science, appears in full in the document. It advocates an emphasis on quality and an endeavor to grant increased freedom in various sectors of the higher education system. Also included is a detailed summary of the memorandum "Independence for Universities and University Colleges." This document proposes increased institutional independence in the following areas: the organization of studies; the programs offered; recruitment of students; appointment of faculty; institutional organization; and the disposition of financial resources and grants. Basic objectives would be high quality scholarship and freedom of research. The document also considers definitions of degrees offered in basic university education, training in research, evaluation and accountability, quantitative planning and resources, the organization of appointments, and institutional organization. (JB)

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SWEDISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE

Date
March 1992

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ED 362 113

INDEPENDENCE FOR SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES

Sweden is preparing a reform of higher education

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SWEDEN IS PREPARING A REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1. The present system

Swedish higher education is based on a parliamentary decision from 1977.

The 1977-decision made in principle all post-secondary school education a part of the system of higher education.

It included a system of nationwide total quantitative planning of the universities and university colleges. The profile of each university and university college is decided through parliamentary decisions.

Educational programmes, directed towards specific areas of the professional labour market, are decided upon by central organs, e.g. parliament and government. Thus the entire university and university college-system is based on politically defined needs.

2. Experiences

Experiences of the 1977 university and university college reform resulted in some severe criticism from those actively engaged in higher education, both students and teachers. This criticism has mainly been directed against the fixed educational programmes in the former science, humanities and social science faculties, in which the course material emphasized the width rather than the depth of the fields of study. It has also been questioned whether it is necessary for the national government to interfere in detail with the substance of the education offered.

Another programme of criticism has been concerned with the internal university decision-making organization, which in some cases has been regarded as over-sized and in other cases as poorly adapted to the different scopes and profiles of the universities and university colleges.

3. The memorandum

In 1991 a task force was set up in the Ministry of Education and Science with the intention of changing

the higher education organization and of making the decisions of quantitative planning by the national government more lucid. Universities and university colleges should be given more independence.

After the change of government, following the parliamentary elections in September 1991 certain aspects have been emphasized more than previously, e.g. the value of variety and flexibility, the competition between different forms of education and different universities, including a system of allocation of resources influenced by the choices of the students.

A memorandum containing proposals for a reform, "Independence for Universities and University Colleges" (Ds 1992:1), was presented in mid-January 1992. It is being discussed by the universities, university colleges, different authorities, organizations, etc during the spring of 1992.

After the circulation procedure for the memorandum is completed, a government bill will be presented to Parliament. The intention is that the new system shall come into force by the autumn of 1993.

THE BASIS FOR THE REFORM OF THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SIGNED BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, PER UNCKEL

"In the Declaration of Government from the 4th of October 1991, the task of strengthening Sweden as a nation of knowledge is declared to be one of the principal tasks of the Government. Within the scope of this ambition higher education and research play a key role.

It is only by means of advanced education and research that Sweden can assert herself in the increasing international competition. Thus, our country can strengthen and deepen the cultural and humanistic values which form part of a good society.

To improve the quality of education and research, is in this perspective decisive for the future development of Sweden.

In the Declaration of Government this emphasis on quality is combined with an endeavour to grant increased freedom into different sectors of the community. This concerns the educational system specifically. The universities and university colleges should not be offshoots to the central government authorities. They should have a more independent position.

In the Government Budget Proposal the 10th of January 1992 I made the following statement on this matter:

> I have two essential reasons for advocating a liberation of this kind for the universities and university colleges. The first is of a qualitative nature. Universities and university colleges, which are independent, possess the best possibilities of providing education of the highest quality. Advanced development of knowledge requires freedom, independence and competition.
>
> The second reason is a matter of principle. A society which appreciates pluralism and is aware of the risks implicit in the power of an all-embracing state must protect the counterbalancing forces. Free universitites and university colleges belong to these forces.

It is thus the endeavour of the Government to seek ways for the gradual liberation of important sectors of higher education and research from the contemporary state influence. In this way both quality and freedom of society at large stand to benefit.

The endeavour to liberate higher education is concerned with all its units. In the case of certain universities and university colleges the Government is also examining the preconditions for taking a further step in the same direction by transferring these to the form of foundations.

Universitites and university colleges possessing greater independence must be assured such working conditions that the competition between them becomes vital. Freedom without incentives for creative competition could otherwise run the risk of leading to the opposite of good results.

This point of view leads to important conclusions with regards to the evaluation of the activities of the universities and university colleges - and not least with respect to making the results of the evaluation known. Good quality shall be rewarded. Inadeqate quality shall not be permitted to continue undisturbed.

The combination of liberation and competition of quality, forms in my opinion the key to the change in the working conditions of the system of higher education and research with which our country now is concerned.

Since the end of the 1970's a demand for uniformity has dominated the regulation of tasks, competence and organization of higher education and research. Under the pressure of criticism from, amongst others, the universities, the scope for adjustment to local and more substance oriented conditions has subsequently increased.

We now face a radical change, not only of the rules, but also of the underlying governing values.

To an increasing extent Sweden will be confronted with international competition with regards to competence in proficiency as well as to economic and financial resources. Sweden's small population and peripheral location mean that we cannot be satisfied with being good. Our aims must be higher than that.

Our way of achieving this objective must be through organizational pluralism, powerful incentives to think in terms of quality, stimulation of individual acceptance of responsibility and leadership, as well as the efficient utilization of material resources. Swedish university degrees shall be regarded internationally competitive. The students' choices must be able to affect the growth and profiles of the universities and university colleges.

The memorandum "Independence for Universities and University Colleges" presents a reform strategy for higher education. The memorandum has been drawn up by officials in the Ministry of Education and Science. The basis has been obtained from earlier political decisions, from other state authorities and from extensive exploratory contacts with individuals within the universities and university colleges. It has not been subject to decisions in details, either by the Government or on my own part. The main themes of the presented proposals are however in line with what I regard as compatible with the government's policy on higher education and research.

The general discussion of the memorandum will form an important part of the background for the final decision which later during 1992 shall be made by the Government and Parliament in these matters. I will therefore emphasize the importance of an open, by all means an inquiring, examination of the discussion as well as of the proposals in the memorandum."

SUMMARY OF THE MEMORANDUM "INDEPENDENCE FOR UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES"

1. Increased independence for universities and university colleges

Considerably increased freedom for universities and university colleges is proposed in the government memorandum "Independence for Universities and University Colleges".

The memorandum, which was drawn up by officials of the Ministry, presents a reform strategy for the universitites and university colleges. The basis of the memorandum has its origin in earlier political decisions,

from other state authorities and from extensive exploratory contacts with individuals in universities and university colleges.

The proposals are intended to give universities and university colleges greater independence. In this way the quality of education and research is strengthened.

Increased independence for universities and university colleges refers to:

* The organization of studies (programmes versus single subjects forming a degree)

* The educational possibilities offered

* The recruitment of students

* The establishment of professorships; the oppointment of professors

* The institutional organization

* The disposition of financial resources and grants

* The redistribution of resources and grants

Increased independence in all these respects means, according to the memorandum, that universities and university colleges will also have <u>increased responsibility</u> for the results and quality of their activities, which implies strict demands on follow-up and evaluation.

It is suggested in the memorandum that future government decisions with respect to universities and university colleges should be made

<u>partly</u> through certain strategical stipulations in the proposals for

* A new Universities and University Colleges Act and

* A new Universities and University Colleges Ordinance,

<u>partly</u> through certain principles for the dimensioning and allocation of resources intended to be applied to

* future budget processes.

2. Basic objectives for universities and university colleges

From a strictly constitutional point of view, a national university system does not demand any regulation by law. Bearing in mind the national importance of the

universities and university colleges, the basic characteristics of their organization should, however, be determined by Parliament. According to the memorandum this would most simply and clearly be achieved in the form of a law.

In the proposed bill for universities and university colleges, the demand for high quality of scholarship should be implemented. Furthermore, the principle of the freedom of research, i.e. research problems must be freely chosen, methods of research must be freely developed and the results of research must be freely published - as at present - must be one of the vital aspects of the universities and university colleges bill.

The following general objectives are formulated with respect partly to all basic education and partly to training in research:

Basic university education shall, in addition to knowledge and proficiency, give the students the ability to judge independently and critically, the ability to solve problems independently and the ability to follow the development of knowledge, all within the sphere covered by the education. The education given, should also develop the ability of the students to exchange information on a scholarly level.

Furthermore, basic education and training in research methods will provide the knowledge and proficiency required to pursue research independently.

3. Basic university education

It is proposed that the centrally governed educational programs, introduced during the previous major university reform in 1977, should be abolished and replaced by a degree ordinance. This should define the varying degrees to be conferred, the demands to be met in order to qualify for the degrees - definitions of the degrees - and it should state which universities and university colleges are entitled to confer the degrees in question.

Three general degrees are proposed:

the Bachelor's Degree after studies of at least three years,

the Master's Degree after studies of at least four years and

the University College Degree after studies of at least eighteen months.

Furthermore 23 different vocational degrees are proposed. These are primarily concerned with professions which require authorization, e.g. doctors and psychologists. Degrees will also be needed for teachers and others engaged in the world of arts.

The recognition of studies at other universities should also be regulated in the ordinance. Local application of this stipulation should not be restrictive if national and international flexibility is to be encouraged.

In addition, stipulations should be included in the ordinance to make it possible to limit the student's right to sit for more than four examinations. Normally graded marks should be awarded.

At present, the greater part of admission to universities and university colleges is through a central authority. It is propose that, with effect from 1st July 1993, every university and university college should itself be entitled to admit its own students. This means that they decide on what merit grounds, principles of selection will be applied. Minimal qualifications rules will, however, be set up for all universities and university colleges. Some technical coordination of the admission activities of the universities and university colleges could be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

4. Training in research

With regard to training in research, it is proposed that the provisions of the ordinance should be limited to basic regulations concerning minimal requirements of competence and admission, curricula and supervision as well as degrees and examinations.

5. Evaluation

According to the memorandum, this new independence places increasing demands on follow-up and evaluation, necessitating a clear sharing of responsibility and carefully prepared forms of accounting.

By means of annual follow-ups of the results of activities and regular evaluations of quality, the Government should be given the basis for future decisions. This applies to both research and education.

It is assumed that universities and university colleges should also evaluate activities on their own initiative in order to improve quality. This means that every university and university college should work out plans/programmes/strategies for a systematic and continuous process of evaluation.

With respect to the national evaluation, Parliament has recently stated, after suggestions in a government bill, that the following three factors should be regarded as being of decisive importance.

Firstly, for the sake of pluralism,. responsibility for the implementation of the evaluations should be spread to many different bodies, some of them entitled to act on their own initiative.

Secondly, the bodies responsible for the implementation of the evaluations should possess such scholarly authority that they should be regarded as legitimate investigators by active personnel in universities and university colleges.

Thirdly, the results of the evaluations must be made available to the public, students and decision-makers. Thanks to this kind of publication those responsible can be encouraged to achieve the best possible results.

As a consequence of these considerations, it has been decided

that responsibility for evaluation at the national level should be entrusted to a secretariat consisting of a number of distinguished university professors,

that the implementation of evaluations should be entrusted to many instances and groups to be set up as is required.

It is decided that the secretariat should be provided with funds making it possible to commission work in connection with evaluation, etc., and that the secretariat should be provided with a small but efficient office.

The participation of clients in the implementation of evaluations is in many cases of great importance. The Swedish academies (the Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, the Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Swedish Academy of Letters History and Antiquities) should be engaged, together with several others, in the task of evaluation. The Government can also reach decisions on the implementation of evaluations under special arrangements.

6. Quantitative planning and resources

Future parliament and government decisions on the dimensioning of basic education should be expressed in more lucid terms, the memorandum suggests. This would give greater scope to universities and university colleges to adapt the range of subjects offered to the wishes of the students. Furthermore, the decisions should be based on the number of graduates and not, as at present, on the number of places available for beginners.

The scope of budgets is laid down for a three-year period at a time. A possible formulation of the educational task or contract, which every university and university college should receive before every three-year period is outlined in the memorandum. The contract, which contains the quantitative objectives, should be expressed in terms of achievement, such as the actual number of whole-year students, the number of whole-year achievements and the number of graduates. The number of whole-year students should be distributed roughly between the various fields of study, while the number of graduates should be stated both totally, as well as for such degrees to which the national government has reason to assure itself on the number of graduates, bearing in mind the labour market's need of a certain number of actively employed people such as doctors.

The memorandum suggests that a part of the grants given to each university and university college will depend on how attractive the institution is. Through such a system the student choices will affect the funds available for each university and university college. Hereby, valuable competition will be encouraged.

The adjustment between fixed and variable resources for research - the balancing between continuity and renewal - is of great importance to research policy. The memorandum contains a discussion on the consequences to the national government, the universities and research scholars of various relations between fixed and variable research resources.

In order to increase the possibilities in the short term of taking account of changed requirements and conditions, the grants system should be organized in such a way that the councils of universities and university colleges during the three-year periods should be empowered to undertake certain limited redistributions between the various faculties.

In order to safeguard the range of small exclusive subjects a list dividing the responsibility for research training in more rare subjects should be drawn up in more detailed regulations as to how means should be distributed between the various universities and university colleges.

7. The organization of appointments

The memorandum suggests that no new appointments of university and university colleges adjunct lecturers shall be established. Thereby, the doctoral degree will be required for all teachers' appointments at universities and university colleges with the exception of artistic departments.

In accordance with previous decisions in Parliament all chairs shall be established and reexamined by the councils of the respective universities themselves.

8. The institutional organization .

Various models for the institutional organization are under discussion.

In the memorandum a model is outlined for the institutional organization, which means that faculty boards, deans boards of departments and directors should be appointed by the council or by the rektor (vice chancellor) on delegation. This model should, for futher discussions be seen as one alternative among others.

The starting point for granting universities and university colleges greater independence than they have today is to enable them to design their own internal organization. By means of certain regulations on the structure of university and university college bodies guarantees for the necessary minimal requirements are created. Students should be guaranteed influence on the boards which are to decide on education. On the other hand it has not been considered necessary in the future to regulate the assistance of representatives of varions professions outside the universities nor of the employees.

Appointments of professors and lecturers shall also in the future be made in accordance with proposals put forward by an appointments proposal board. In the proposed ordinance it is recommended that the board should have a simpler structure consisting of three experts and a chairman, all appointed by the faculty board.